

National Current Affairs

International Conference on Sustainable Biofuels, 2018 to be held in New Delhi

International Conference on Sustainable Biofuels, ICSB 2018 will be held in New Delhi on 26th and 27th February, 2018.

- This conference is being jointly organised by Mission Innovation – India Unit and Biofuture Platform and will be hosted by Department of Biotechnology under Union Ministry of Science and Technology.
- Mission Innovation (MI) is a global initiative of 22 countries and the European Union to accelerate global clean energy innovation, while Biofuture Platform is a multi-stakeholder mechanism for policy dialogue and collaboration among leading countries to increase the use of low carbon sources as the feedstock for the production of energy, chemicals and materials.
- The Conference will be inaugurated by Union Minister for Science and technology, Earth Sciences and Environment Forest & Climate Change, Dr. Harsh Vardhan.
- More than 300 participants including experts from Biofuels sector, senior Government Officers, Technical Experts, Academicians, Researchers and Representatives from 18 countries will participate in this conference.
- The conference will serve as a common platform for Government policy makers, investors and research community to express their views and share their experience related to development and scaling of advance biofuels.
- A “New Delhi Declaration on Sustainable Biofuels” will be endorsed during the course of the conference.

Modi launches Rs 1000-cr development schemes for Daman & Diu

On February 24, 2018, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched development schemes worth Rs 1000 crore for Daman and Diu.

- PM Modi launched the Pawan Hans helicopter service between Diu and Daman. Diu and Daman are separated by Gulf of Khambhat and it takes 16 hours to commute between these two places by road. The chopper service will reduce the commute time to an hour.
- PM Modi also launched Ahmedabad-Diu flight service under UDAN (Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik—let the common citizen of the country fly), Regional Air Connectivity scheme.

- In Daman, PM Modi laid foundation stones for several projects, including a water treatment plant, an electric sub-station, a gas pipeline, a municipal market and a foot-bridge.
- He also inaugurated anganwadis (child care centres) and schools constructed under corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives.

Prime Minister launches Amma two-wheeler scheme in Tamil Nadu

Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched subsidised Amma two-wheeler Scheme meant for working women on the occasion of former Chief Minister Jayalalithaaa's 70th birth anniversary. He also launched 70-lakh tree sapling planting drive.

- Under the scheme, every beneficiary will be given 50% of cost of a two-wheeler or grant of Rs. 25,000.
- It will cover one lakh working women every year.
- The subsidised scooter scheme for working women is an electoral promise of former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Jayalalithaa.
- During the 2016 Assembly election, she had promised 50% subsidy for women to purchase two-wheelers.

CII partnership summit held in Visakhapatnam

The annual three-day partnership summit of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) began in Visakhapatnam on February 24, 2018.

- This summit is being jointly organised by the Andhra Pradesh State Government, the CII, and the Department of Industrial Policy and Promotion under Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry.
- The inaugural session of this summit was attended by Union Commerce and Industry Minister Suresh Prabhu, noted industrialists Gautam Adani and Adi Godrej along with Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu.
- The key highlight of the first day was a memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between Andhra Pradesh State Government and Adani group for the construction of the port with an estimated investment of Rs 8000 crore.

15th edition of BioAsia 2018 held in Hyderabad

15th edition of BioAsia, the annual flagship event of the Government of Telangana, was held from 22nd – 24th February, 2018 in Hyderabad.

- BioAsia is a preeminent technology and bio-business convention in Asia for Life sciences, pharmaceuticals and healthcare which brings together all the national as well as international stakeholders of Pharma and Life Sciences sector.
- Theme of BioAsia 2018 was “RIGHT TIME, RIGHT NOW” focusing on strategies to keep up with pace of change and innovative ways to develop new models for distribution & healthcare delivery.
- The event was attended by 1500 delegates from over 55 countries.
- Ireland, Netherlands and South Africa were the International Partners while Gujarat, Assam and Rajasthan were the partner states for this event.

Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav begins in Madhya Pradesh

On 24th February 2018, Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav celebrations began in Madhya Pradesh.

- The Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav is organized by the Ministry of Culture under the Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat matrix. This event is held in several locations of Madhya Pradesh like Bhopal, Gwalior etc.
- Rashtriya Sanskriti Mahotsav is being celebrated to highlight the idea of unity in diversity. It is conducted for 7 days.
- Nagaland and Manipur are the states paired with Madhya Pradesh. The event will feature a variety of art forms such as classical music, folk music, dance, theatre, literature, visual arts, etc.
- A handloom and handicrafts-utsav is conducted as a part of the seven-day event. A food festival is also conducted to exhibit the food culture of Madhya Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and other partnering states.
- A literary meet named ‘Samvaad’, will be held with participation from writers and poets from Manipur, Nagaland and other North Eastern States.

International Current Affairs

Indo-Seychelles joint Army exercise ‘Lamitye’ begins in Seychelles

8th edition of Indo-Seychelles joint counter insurgency/counter terrorism exercise, named ‘Lamitye’ began on February 24, 2018 in Seychelles.

- ‘Lamiye’ means friendship in Creole (local dialect).
- ‘Exercise Lamitye’ is conducted biennially with an aim of enhancing cooperation and interoperability between Indian Army and Seychelles People’s Defence Forces.

- Indian contingent to 8th edition of 'Exercie Lamitye' comprises four officers, five Junior Commissioned Officers and 36 army personnel from other Ranks.

Saudi Arabia hosts its first ever jazz festival in Riyadh

Saudi Arabia conducted 'Groovz Jazz Festival', its first ever jazz festival, at the Riyadh Intercontinental Hotel, in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia from 22nd to 24th February 2018.

- The Groovz Jazz Festival was conducted for 3 days. Nearly, 2,000 people attended this festival.
- The concert was organized by Time Entertainment. A divided seating arrangement was provided separately for men and women. Family areas were also provided.
- Both local and international artistes performed at the festival. Bands from Riyadh, Beirut and New Orleans performed at the festival.
- Apart from musical performances, food trucks, a vintage car display etc. were also featured in the Groovz Jazz Festival.

Business

EESL Signs MoUs of Rs 3,730 Crore Projects in Andhra Pradesh

On February 24, 2018, government-run Energy Efficiency Services Ltd (EESL) signed memorandum of understanding (MoUs) with Andhra Pradesh State Government to invest Rs 3730 crore in the state.

- The MoUs envisage supply of 10000 electric cars and 4000 chargers to various departments of Andhra Pradesh through Non-conventional Energy Development Corporation of Andhra Pradesh Limited (NREDCAP).
- Other MoUs were related to supply of approximately 17 lakh smart energy meters to two power distribution companies in Andhra Pradesh viz. – Andhra Pradesh Eastern Power Distribution Company Ltd. (APEPDCL), and Andhra Pradesh Southern Power Distribution Company Limited (APSPDCL).
- MoU for establishment of small solar PV-based power projects in phases was also signed.
- These MoUs were signed in presence of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu and EESL Managing Director Saurabh Kumar during the course of CII Partnership Summit in Visakhapatnam.

Appointments & Resigns

Rahul Mahajan is Rajya Sabha TV Editor-in-Chief

Senior journalist Rahul Mahajan was appointed Editor-in-Chief of Rajya Sabha TV, owned and operated by the Upper House of Parliament.

- Mahajan, who hails from Shimla in Himachal Pradesh, has 26 years of media experience, including 23 years in various news channels.
- At present, he is Consultant Editor in Prasar Bharti.

Science & Technology

Siemens commissions medium-voltage training lab for Indian Navy

Siemens India has commissioned a first-of-its-kind Medium-Voltage (MV) training lab at INS Valsura, Gujarat, for the Indian Navy.

- This MV lab facilitates Indian Navy officials to train, manage and operate modern equipment of Indian Navy without going to the field.
- This lab will be utilized for first stage training of naval personnel on Medium Voltage Power Generation, Protection & Distribution and MV Drives & Motors.
- Siemens supplied Motors & Converters, Medium Voltage and Low Voltage Switchboards and automation systems for the facility.
- This lab consists of equipment manufactured in India and is in line with the Make in India initiative.
- Construction of this project started in February 2017. It has been completed in just 11 months of time.

Environment

Drypetes kalamii: New plant species from West Bengal

Scientists from Botanical Survey of India (BSI) have identified new plant species named *Drypetes kalamii* from Buxa and Jaldapara National Parks in West Bengal. It has been named after former President of India, Dr APJ Kalam.

- The new species is close relative of medicinal plant known in Sanskrit as Putrajivah.
- *Drypetes kalamii* is small shrub found to be shorter version of its close relative *Drypetes ellisii*.
- It is found in wet, shaded areas of subtropical, moist semi-evergreen forests, at heights of 50-100 metres.
- It is just 1 metre tall and is unisexual in nature, which means they have separate male and female plants.
- Scientists have provisionally assessed plant to be “Critically Endangered” as per IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) rules. It faces threat from forest fires and grazing.

Sports

Aruna Budda Reddy becomes 1st Indian to win individual medal at Gymnastics World Cup

Aruna Budda Reddy became the first Indian gymnast to win an individual medal at the Gymnastics World Cup by bagging a bronze medal in the women’s vault event, in Melbourne, Australia.

- Aruna Budda Reddy scored 13.649 in the women’s vault event and finished in the third position. She won the bronze medal in the women’s vault event.
- Slovenia’s Tjasa Kysslef won gold medal and Australia’s Emily Whitehead won silver medal. Another Indian woman Pranati Nayak scored 13.416 and finished in the sixth position.
- Aruna Budda Reddy will also participate in the final round of the floor event on 25th February 2018. India’s Rakesh Patra finished in the fourth position in the men’s rings event.

Obituary

Veteran Actress Sridevi passes away

Bollywood star Sridevi died in Dubai on 24th February 2018.

- Sridevi had been to Dubai with her family to attend her nephew's wedding.
- She started her career as a child artiste in a Tamil movie in 1969. Later, she acted in several Tamil movies. She had also acted in other South Indian languages like Malayalam, Telugu and Kannada.
- She made her Bollywood debut in 1978 and had acted in numerous films afterwards. She was awarded Padma Shri award in 2013.

Senior journalist Neelabh Mishra passes away

On 24th February 2018, Neelabh Mishra, a senior journalist passed away.

- Neelabh Mishra was the editor-in-chief of National Herald newspaper.
- Mishra was instrumental in the launch of National Herald's digital news website in 2016.
- He also re-launched the National Herald as Sunday newspaper in 2017. He also made National Herald's sister publications Navjivan and Qaumi Awaz as news websites.

RSS founder member Bhanu Shashtri dies

Bhanu Kumar Shashtri, founder member of Bharatiya Jana Sangh and former MP passed away in Udaipur, Rajasthan.

- Bhanu Kumar Shashtri was the chairman of the Khadi Board.
- He also became an MP from Udaipur. Bharatiya Jana Sangh was the political arm of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS).